

Every Child Learning Every Day



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READY TO LEARN

Concept books for the holidays

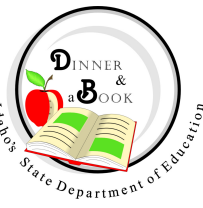
By Dr. Stan Steiner

This holiday season brings some wonderful concept books for lap sitters, toddlers and children looking for a tactile experience.

"The Twelve Days of Christmas," by Jan Brett. Putnam, 1986/2004. Readers and lap sitters will be mesmerized by the intricately detailed illustrations.

"Santa's Suit," by Kate Lee. Illus. by Edward Eaves. Scholastic, 2003. What happens if Santa gets tired of wearing the same old red suit?

This touch and feel book provides some fashionable deviations for young minds to think about.



"A Firefly in a Fir Tree: A Carol for Mice," by Carol Knight. HarperCollins, 2004. In a rollicking twist to a familiar song two mice turn their home into a season of pure fun. Knight's illustrations match the jolly spirit shared by all.

"Robert's Snow," by Grace Lin. Viking, 2004. Robert's parents told him that mice don't go out in the snowy winters. His unexpected chance comes when the window blows open.

"The Christmas Alphabet," by Robert Sabuda. Orchard, 1994/2004. If you missed this hard to put down lift-the-flap book the first time, don't miss this chance. Sabuda's intricate pop ups are spectacular.

"The Angel and The Christmas Rabbit and 24 Advent Stories," Selected by Brigitte Weninger. Penguin, 2002/2004. Twenty four wonderful stories from European writers and illustrators. Each story is linked to the next story, but remember, only one a day in the advent tradition!

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Make holiday memories that last

Dear Reader:

The holidays bring with them increased activity and bustle. Parents can get caught in the race to find the perfect gift, and it is easy to lose sight of the holiday spirit. Remember that children often are drawn to objects that spark their creativity – many times it is the box rather than the expensive toy that they choose to play with.

Every year, it seems that holiday time gets busier and the time we have to spend with loved ones shrinks. This year, I encourage you to make the gift of shared time with your child. Have him help you in the kitchen, work on a project together, and share reading.

As the weather turns colder and the days grow shorter, it's tempting to stay inside in front of the TV. Now can be a good time to learn



Dr. Marilyn Howard
Superintendent of Public Instruction

about the benefits of physical activity – it can be a special treat to build a snowman together, or bundle up and take a walk

in the evening to see the stars. Afterwards, warm up and encourage your child to practice math in the kitchen by helping to prepare hot chocolate and peanut butter balls.

Included in this newsletter are ideas for creating holiday projects such as Jennifer Williams describes in her column, ideas for sharing books with your child, and recipes to try in the kitchen.

Give the gift of time with these activities and through your own family traditions. It is the memories you build with your child this season that will truly last.

Marilyn Howard

READY TO LEARN

Activities make shared reading fun

Shared book reading is one of the favorite activities of parents and children. This activity is highly related to children's eagerness to read and success in reading at school. Parents are understandably concerned if their child doesn't appear to enjoy reading stories.

Here are some things you can do to make shared book reading fun! Put out a few storybooks or information books and then notice which one your child picks up. Start with that one.

Storybook Preview:

Start with just a few minutes. Look at some of the pictures, and describe the actions and new words.



Story-book Read Aloud:

Read just part of the same book, de-

pending on how long your child can pay attention. Say, "Oh, I wonder what will happen next? What do you think?" Read the rest of the story in parts if your child can't sit throughout.

Reread the story: Point out items you missed the first time, ask your child what comes next.

Celebrate the Story (or part of the story, if you've shortened the time). Ask if your child might want to draw a pic-

ture about the story, or to act out the part of the story you just read. You could act it out first with real drama, so that she can see how entertaining the "story" can be. Be sure to put up pictures on the refrigerator and talk about the picture and story when you are together in the kitchen.

The key is to try to pick something in which your child has a big interest; it might be trucks or bugs! Keep shared reading time short and follow it with an activity your child really likes (drawing, singing, acting out the story, cuddling, etc.). You'll find your child sticking with the activity longer, and requesting favorite books.



RESOURCES

2-1-1 Services in Idaho offer help

Parents can dial 2-1-1 to find out about community and public resources in their area. All calls are confidential.

Get help. 2-1-1 is a nationally recognized easy access number you can dial to learn about health and human services.

In Idaho, the Idaho CareLine, of the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, is the 2-1-1 call center. The 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine offers free bilingual telephone information and referral service to link Idahoans with more than 3,000 health and human service providers. 2-1-1 links people to services such as prenatal care, immunizations, adolescent pregnancy prevention, Medicaid resources, child development information, adoption/foster care services, nutrition information, child care referrals, child abuse prevention, services for the elderly, diabetes treatment and prevention, and more.

The 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. MST, Monday through Friday.

For more information about resources in your community call 2-1-1 or 1-800-926-2588 or visit www.211idaho.com or www.idahocareline.org.

Give help. The United Way Volunteer Center is the "Give Help" component of 2-1-1 in Idaho. Visit the Volunteer Center and explore the possibilities: www.unitedwaytv.org/volunteercenter.asp.

Idaho CareLine • United Way

Get Connected. Get Answers.
 Dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-926-2588

NUTRITION

Warm up with these old fashioned treats

Young children enjoy cooking projects that are simple and make them feel included in meal preparation. Family baking times are opportunities for adults to guide children on the importance of good nutrition.



After outdoor activities, help children warm up with the recipes below. The hot cocoa recipe is inexpensive and has a rich, old fashioned taste to it. The No Bake Peanut Butter Balls are a fun cooking activity that will add a nutri-

tious snack to your holiday recipe collection. Whatever you do with your children this holiday season, remember it is important to have activities that the whole family can enjoy together. So pull on your hat and mittens and run and play with your children often and remember to save room for these nutritious holiday treats.

Old Fashioned Hot Cocoa

8-ounce cup or mug
 1 teaspoon sugar
 1 teaspoon cocoa
 3 ounces evaporated milk—skim
 Heat milk in saucepan over medium heat until just sim-

mering. Place sugar and cocoa in mug, add milk and stir. Be careful not to splash the hot milk.

No Bake Peanut Butter Balls

½ cup peanut butter
 ½ cup honey
 1 cup crushed corn flakes cereal
 2 tablespoons powdered milk

Set corn flakes aside. Mix all other ingredients well.

Roll into balls. Then roll again in Cornflakes until covered. Makes 20 1-inch balls. Refrigerate leftovers. Great with milk or hot cocoa!

READY TO LEARN

Sequencing builds understanding of how things fit

Helping your child tell the difference between objects and know time sequences will help build math and reading skills for school.

Birth to 1 year: When playing with your child, move objects together and say something like, "I'm putting my cars here." And comment on how your baby has placed his objects.

1 to 3 years old: By the time your child is between 1 and 2 years of age, he will start telling the difference in sizes by nesting objects (plastic bowls, toys that nest), and can place a square and a circle in a puzzle board. Older children in this group can practice matching colors, shapes, letters and numbers. He or she will also like to match real objects to

pictures of objects.

3 to 5 years old: Talk about the concepts of big and little, tall and short, tallest, largest, shortest, and smallest. Use vacation pictures and help put three or four pictures in the right sequence. Talk about the sequence in reading a book; from left to right, top to bottom, and front to back. Talk about your day and your child's day in a sequence; make it a story.

Skills needed for kindergarten: Use words like before, after, first, next. Sort objects by size.

Books and other resources: "The Doorbell Rang," by Pat Hutchins.

ARTS

Holiday projects fine tune motor skills

By Jennifer Williams

2002 Idaho Teacher of the Year

Engaging children in developmentally appropriate activities can help strengthen fine motor skills, and is a perfect way to share fun and creative opportunities. The greatest challenge is letting the child do the work himself.

With the holidays just around the corner, the creation of a holiday picture is an excellent activity to help develop fine motor skills. Tweezers are used as an extension of the fingers.

Objective: Helping to develop fine motor skills.

Materials: Tweezers, ice cube trays or muffin tins, a bowl, miscellaneous paper clips, small craft items (pom-pom's, beads, buttons,

feathers, ribbon, etc.), poster board, glue and a brush.

Process: Squirt a large 'blob' of glue in the middle of the poster board. Using the brush, have children spread the glue to the outer edges. Place the paper clips and craft items in a bowl and allow the children to pick up the items, using the tweezers and transporting them, one at a time, to the paper or poster board.

*Items can be sorted by color or as a pre-Math extension, they can be sorted into containers.

This is a wonderful exercise for those small finger muscles (and an even better exercise for the adults cleaning up excess craft materials from the floor!)